

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**REGULAR MEETING****Monday, November 5, 2001**

Present: June Bailey, Glen Dey, Janet Miller, M.S. Mitchell, and Trix Niernberger

Absent: Joe Todd

Also Present: Jim Guy, Bryan Barr, Keith Lawing, Sam Lentz, Kim Edgington, Claire Willenberg - Wichita Historic Preservation Board; Marvin Krout, Kathy Morgan, Tonia Fairbanks and Shelly Berger - Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Department; Mike North - Law Department; Doug Kupper and Maryann Crockett (staff)

Public Present: Paul Fortier; Eric Engstrom; Pamela Kingsbury; Lois Ann Newman

President Mitchell called the meeting to order at approximately 3:00 p.m. The minutes of the Regular Meetings of September 17, 2001 and October 8, 2001 were reviewed and approved.

1. **Discussion of Wichita Register of Historic Places Landmark designation for North Linwood Park.** Kathy Morgan, Historic Preservation Planner, referred board members to the staff report and Council Agenda Item regarding the issue. She gave a brief background of the process used to designate a property as an historic landmark. She commented that the Fortier brothers and the Friends of North Linwood had nominated North Linwood Park for the designation.

Morgan said the park met several of the criteria for the designation established in the Historic Preservation Ordinance and City Code as follows: the area is associated with the Schweiter family, who were one of the founding families of the City of Wichita; the park has been in existence for over 100 years and has only been used as open prairie and parkland; and the park is viewed as a community icon. She said the application has been reviewed and unanimously approved by both the Historic Preservation Board (HPB) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission. She added that the application has also been reviewed by District Advisory Board I, who recommended approval of the local designation.

Morgan explained that designating the park as a local landmark would require that any changes to the park such as structures, etc., be submitted to the HPB for design review. She said the HPB was willing to work with the Park and Recreation Department and develop a "Memorandum of Understanding" regarding what items needed to be submitted to the HPB for review. She explained that the next step was to present the nomination to the City Council for final approval; however, since the park was under the aegis of the Park Board, it was decided to first bring the matter to the Park Board for review and comment.

There was brief discussion concerning any legal ramifications or budgetary considerations if the park was designated as a Wichita landmark. Staff explained that other than design review by the HPB and listing as a local historic site, the designation should have no other effect on the park. Responding to a question, Morgan explained that designation as a local historic landmark did not impact a 500-foot radius around the park. The 500-foot radius would only apply if the park were declared a State or Federal registered property on the National Register of Historic Places.

On motion by Niernberger, second by Miller, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to recommend approval of the local landmark designation.

2. **Discussion of Riverside Park.** President Mitchell referred board members to the minutes of the 10/01/01 Historic Preservation Board (HPB) meeting and the handout, which was a letter to Council Member Sharon Fearey from Keith Lawing, President of the Historic Preservation Board, regarding the Riverside Park System Master Plan.

Kathy Morgan briefly summarized President Lawing's correspondence stating that the HPB agreed with many of the plan elements; however, they expressed concern that the proposed design deviated from L.W. Clapp's original design, which was based on the principles of Olmstedeian landscaping. She said the HPB did not feel that the following elements were appropriate to the original natural park setting: the pinwheel design, wall of humanity, attenuated calendar, proposed artwork, arbor at Park Villa, amphitheater, additional parking, and pond. She commented that the HPB liked the proposed zero depth water feature, running center, roundabouts, and additional shelters. She said the HPB was also concerned about the lack of maintenance along the river and the historic structures within the park.

Niernberger commented that maintenance was a problem in all park areas. She added that Director Kupper has reorganized the department to better address park maintenance needs and that there has been improvement in that area. She asked if the HPB would be willing to support a budget increase for the Park and Recreation Department. President Lawing stated that the HPB would consider lending support to a budget increase, provided the HPB knew where the funds would be allocated. He said the HPB had a sincere desire to work with the Park Board to maintain and preserve not only Riverside Park, but other historic park sites as well. He explained that Council Member Fearey had requested input from the HPB on the Riverside Plan and that the Board did not want to appear to be overly critical. He added that the HPB appreciated the fact that the Park and Recreation Department was trying to renovate Riverside Park.

President Mitchell referred board members to the Project Organization Chart attached to the agenda. Director Kupper explained that staff requested closure of Murdock, Stackman and the roadway by Park Villa to revert the areas to green space. He added that the proposed parking lots would be green parking lots paved with "grass pavers" (reinforcements under the soil) and irrigated as opposed to paved parking areas. He mentioned that approximately 100 spaces of the parking area would be paved to provide handicapped accessibility. He added that Park Villa was not in the original Scope of Services provided Wilson-Darnell-Mann: however, it was a popular location for weddings and staff felt a floral arbor would present a better back drop than the restroom building. He said Phase I of the project included

removing the road, creating a formal parking lot off the drive and cleaning up the pond at Park Villa.

Dey asked if there was any information such as a plaque in the park explaining who L.W. Clapp or Frederick Law Olmsted were? Morgan responded not at the present time. Dey commented that it would be a good opportunity to educate the public. Morgan stated that Planning staff has applied for grant monies through the State Historical Office to conduct a survey of Wichita's historic parks in order to write a history. She said the grant was an 80%/20% match, with the City providing 20% of the funding. She added that there may be additional grant opportunities for repair and renovation projects.

President Mitchell asked if the public had any additional comments or input:

- Eric Engstrom, 901 Wiley – provided board members a handout entitled “Wichita’s National Treasure: The Riverside Park System” by Pamela D. Kingsbury, Architectural Historian. He said a lot of talent has gone into the new design; however, some of the elements are simply inappropriate and too much for a gorgeous, meadow-like park. He said as a taxpayer, he was more concerned with maintenance issues. He said the park needs new plantings, curbs and commented that many elements that seemed important ten years ago when the plan was initially designed have simply disappeared. He said one of the most important elements was riverbank improvements and focus on the river. He stated that he felt the artwork was inappropriate for a natural park setting; that he had reservations about the roundabouts and removing the extension of Murdock and would like to see the research by Traffic Engineering on the traffic patterns. He also said he saw no reason to move the duck pond and remove other elements of the old zoo (Kansas Wildlife Exhibit). He also expressed concern about whether the design has been coordinated with other capital improvements planned along the river corridor.
- Pamela Kingsbury commented that she felt the proposed design has forgotten L.W. Clapp and the fact that the Riverside Park System is one of the great landscape parks in the country. She said the park has been neglected and needs to be renovated and restored, but it does not need to be changed into an amusement park.
- Claire Willenberg mentioned that both the Rowing Association and WSU were losing the facility where they store their shells.

There was brief discussion concerning attendance at the Regatta over the weekend and the possibility of finding accommodations to house/store the Wichita Rowing Association and the WSU Rowing Club's boats and equipment. Director Kupper indicated that because of various projects, the Big Arkansas River level would be dropped the next one to two years. He said the rowing groups currently leased Ralph Wulz Riverside Tennis Center for storage purposes and that staff was working with them to find a permanent home. He said two locations being discussed were Minisa Park and Riverside Park adjacent to the proposed run center. He said the City was willing to give the groups the land and space along the river for their floating docks; however, funding of the project would be the responsibility of the rowing groups.

On motion by Bailey, second by Niernberger, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to receive and file the minutes, correspondence and comments at today's meeting.

3. **Oak Park History – Phillip Mellor.** President Mitchell introduced Phillip Mellor. Mr. Mellor commented that his father, H.L. Mellor, was a protégé of L.W. Clapp and worked for the City during the 1920's as the Superintendent of Parks. He mentioned that Oak Park, designed by L.W. Clapp, is located at the site of the old tin can dump and said his father was in charge of the Oak Park construction project. He stated that his father studied the limestone outcroppings in the Flint Hills, bought the stones from the landowners, and reconstructed them at Oak Park attempting to keep them in the same configurations. Mr. Mellor concluded his presentation by relating several other anecdotes about the Riverside Park Zoo and other incidents that occurred in and around the Riverside Park/Oak Park area in the 1920's and 1930's.
4. **Update on Grove Park Project.** Director Kupper reported that he has not had an opportunity to walk Grove Park since the National Guard started road clearing operations last weekend. He said another Guard unit was loading the cleared debris for transfer to Brooks Landfill in exchange for use of a Recreation Facility for their Christmas party. He added that Mid-Kansas Engineering Consultants surveyed the road path into the park. He concluded by stating the Gossen Livingston has provided City Engineering staff the specifications for the bid process, which should occur within the next two to three weeks.

President Mitchell asked about setting up a meeting with the neighborhood group. Director Kupper suggested that the meeting be postponed until after the bids have been received. He commented that there were numerous "alternates" in the bid proposal in order to give the neighborhood group a variety of projects to choose to support. He commented that a contract should be awarded around the first of the year.

5. **Discussion of City's Wireless Communication Master Plan.** President Mitchell referred board members to the copy of the City's Wireless Communication Master Plan. He asked board members if they wanted to adopt a policy or standard, or if they preferred to review each tower request on a case-by-case basis. Dey referred to an article in the Wichita-Eagle dated 11/5/01 on the issue and suggested that the Board wait until the new guidelines were published.
6. **Report on Herman Hill Park Environmental Education Center.** Director Kupper referred board members to the aerial photograph of Herman Hill Park and the rendering of the Environmental Education Center. He said the first phase of the project would be construction of the stripper plant and the second phase, which was the Environmental Education Center should be completed by 2002. Niernberger asked if funding was in place for completion of the project? Director Kupper stated there should be no problem obtaining adequate funding.
 - Lois Ann Newman asked if there would be space for the Community Police Officers in the facility. She commented that they are currently located on Waco. Director Kupper responded that no room would be available at the Environmental Education Center; however, he believed the Police Department was looking into expanding the Police

Substation currently located at the park. Responding to a question from Newman, Director Kupper said part of the project was to irrigate the entire park and provide environmental education on water resources through an interactive stream and pond (with underwater viewing screen) on site. He said future plans could include pumping treated water over to the Watson Park pond system. Newman asked about the possibility of constructing a connecting path for pedestrian and bicycle traffic between Watson and Herman Hill parks. Director Kupper said that idea has been discussed in conjunction with the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

7. **Director's Update.**

- **Fairmount Park.** Director Kupper reported that the design/remodel contract for both the shelter and restrooms had been awarded to Sutherland. He said one idea being discussed for the design was a portico. Bailey asked about the status of the pool demolition. Director Kupper responded that he had requested resources to address the issue next year; however, he was not sure that would be possible.
- **Playground Equipment Replacement Program.** Director Kupper reported that approximately \$694,000 was left of the \$1,000,000 budget for replacement of playground equipment. He said staff estimated that approximately twenty-one playgrounds could be refurbished with those funds. He commented that they were finalizing negotiations with AFCO out of Kansas City and that the entire project should be completed by August 1, 2002. He said in addition, staff was negotiating a price to move the playground equipment at Claude Lambke Park. Bailey requested a list of the parks.
- **Report on Summer of Discovery (SOD).** Director Kupper reported that the Summer of Discovery Program posted a 102% cost recovery. He said swimming pools recouped 58.9%, with College Hill recouping 92% and McAdams recouping 27%. Bailey asked how many children participated in SOD? Director Kupper responded that the program served the same number of children in 2001 as were served in 2000, and added that number would probably remain constant, unless the program was expanded to additional sites. He also commented that another reason for the successful cost recovery was that accounts receivables were monitored more closely this year. He concluded by stating that staff was researching several pilot programs geared for 12-14 year olds utilizing school sites.

Niernberger commended staff for their efforts with the swimming pools and requested that staff consider extending swimming pool hours in low-income neighborhoods. There was brief discussion concerning swimming pool staffing issues.

- **Request for Planning Retreat and Park Tour.** Director Kupper suggested the Board set aside one day and consider the planning retreat in the morning followed by a tour in the afternoon. It was the general consensus of the Board that the retreat/tour be delayed until a new board member is appointed from District III.
- **Oak Park Lily Pond and Pump.** Director Kupper reported that the estimate to repair the Oak Park pump and well was approximately \$34,000. He listed the various services and

materials included in the price. He said repairs would be funded through the CIP budget, not associated with the Riverside Park System Master Plan. He also mentioned that repairs would be coordinated through Wilson-Darnell-Mann.

Staff reminded board members that the December 10 meeting would be held at the Great Plains Nature Center, 6232 E. 29th St., North (weather permitting).

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.

M.S. Mitchell, President

ATTEST:

Maryann Crockett, Clerk
Recording Secretary